

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (RTHU)

Feeder vs. Flower Visit Protocol Field Guide

(U.S. and Canada)

Task

To count and compare the number of times RTHUs visit flowers and feeders in 45 minutes

What You Need

- Hummingbird feeder
- Fresh food mixture for hummingbird feeder
- [Ruby-throated Hummingbird Feeder Vs. Flower Visit Data Sheet](#)
- Bird identification guide
- Camera
- Bird identification guide
- Clipboard
- Pencil or pen
- Binoculars (optional)

In the Field

1. Fill out the top of the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird Feeder Vs. Flower Visit Data Sheet*. Record date and time period that observations are made.
2. For each RTHU seen, identify its sex and age if possible.
3. Record each visit to the feeder and flowers on the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird Feeder Vs. Flower Visit Data Sheet* during the 45 minutes. Record by the following categories:
 - Red-throated adult male (March through October)
 - Adult female (white-throated, March and April only)
 - Undetermined sex (if throat is not observed)
 - Undetermined sex (adult female/young female/young male, May through October, if throat is unmarked)
 - Young male (if throat is heavily streaked in green or black and/or has one or more red feathers)

Note 1: If an individual bird enters the garden and feeds on a flower, then at a feeder, then on a flower, it counts as two flower visits and one feeder visit. Every separate visit to a flower or feeder is counted. If a bird feeds on the same flower or flower stalk several times in succession, it counts as only one flower visit. If a bird feeds on Flower A, then on Flower B, and again on Flower A, it counts as three visits. This procedure is different from the observations made when you are looking only at feeder visits or only at flower visits.

Note 2: If you see a color-marked or unusual RTHU, other species of hummingbirds (vagrants), or ANY hummingbird from mid-October through mid-March, describe the color markings and shape of beak. Record your observations on the [Ruby-throated Hummingbird Sighting Data Sheet](#). Contact Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History at research@hiltonpond.org or (803) 684-5852 as soon as possible.